

THE CARTEL Z

*Story and Illustrations by
Ana Palacios*



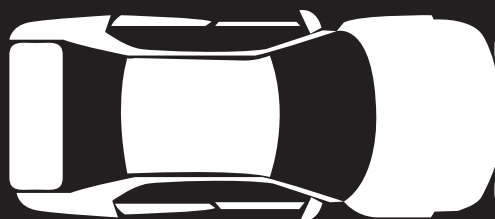
"You can leave in 5 minutes. The new nurse is here and she'll cover the rest of your nightshift"

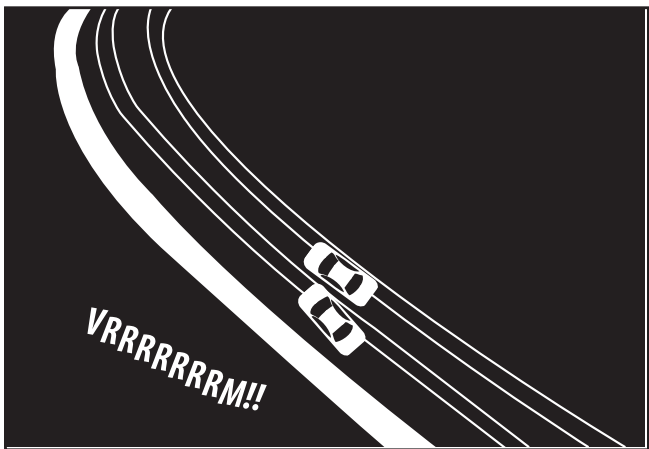
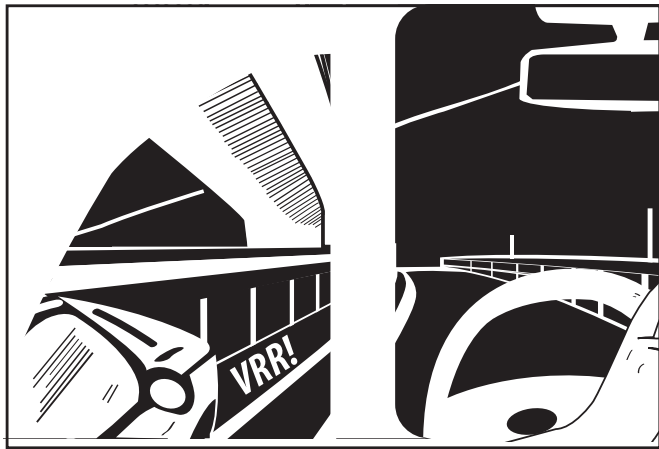
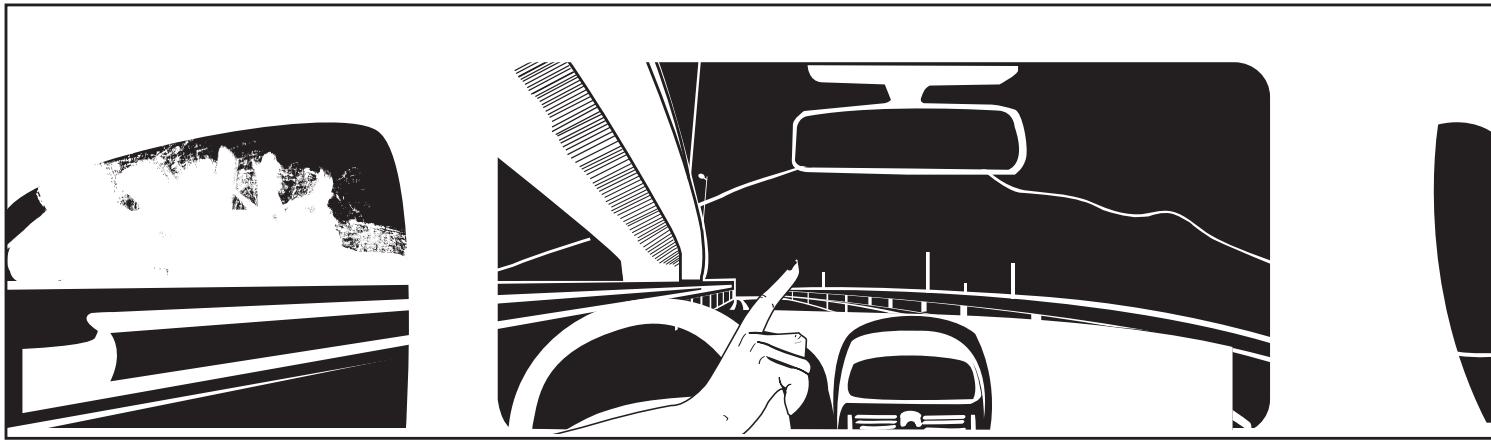
PARKING

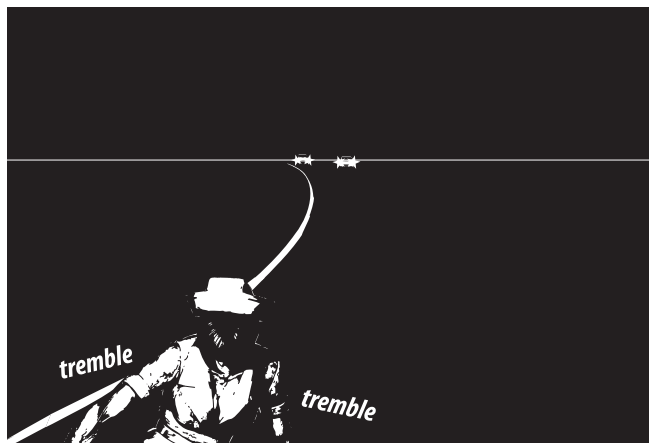
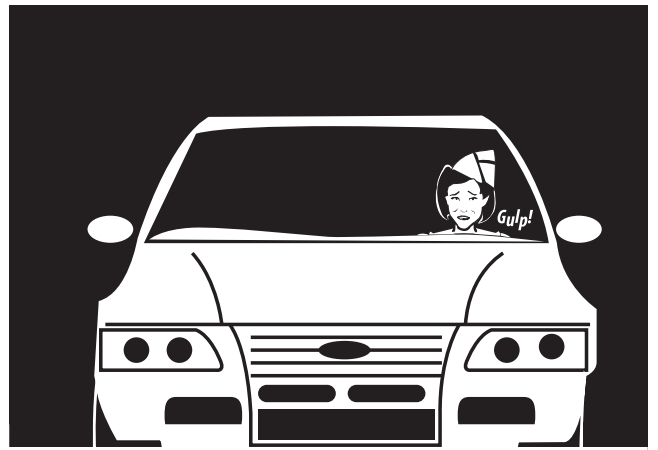
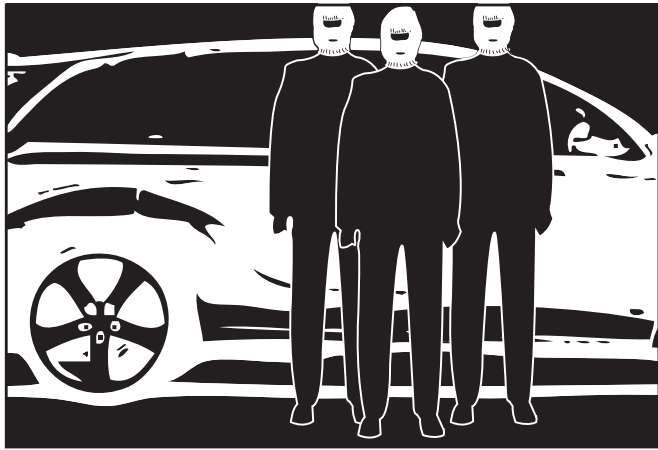
"Thanks Maria. See you tomorrow morning"

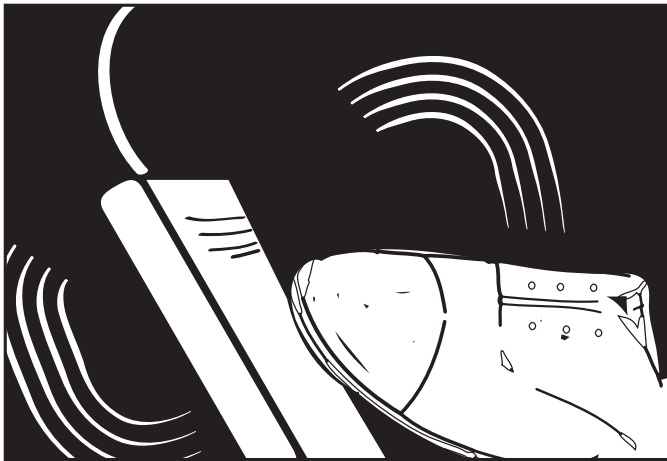


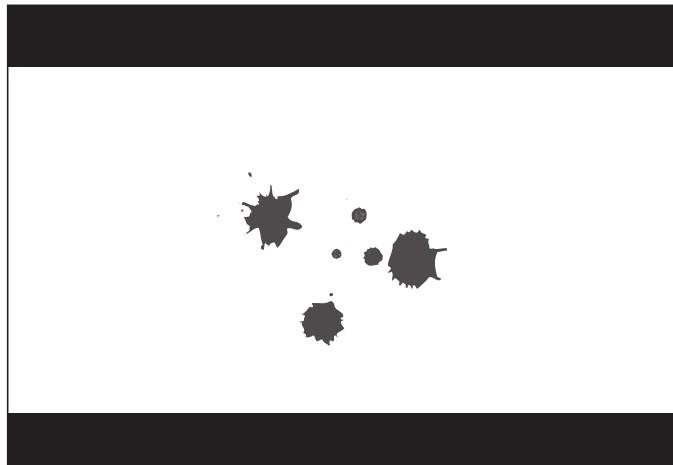
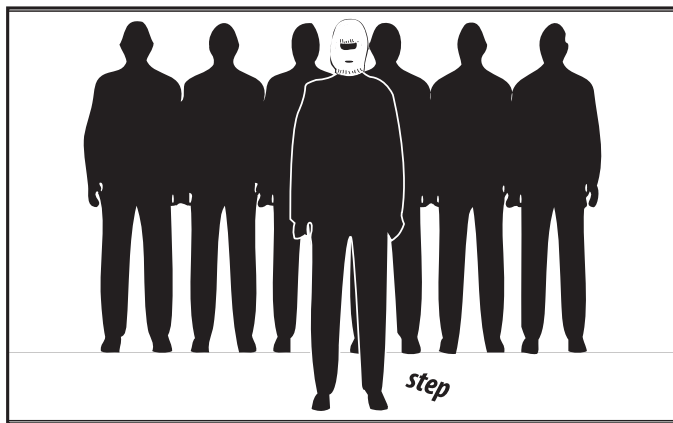
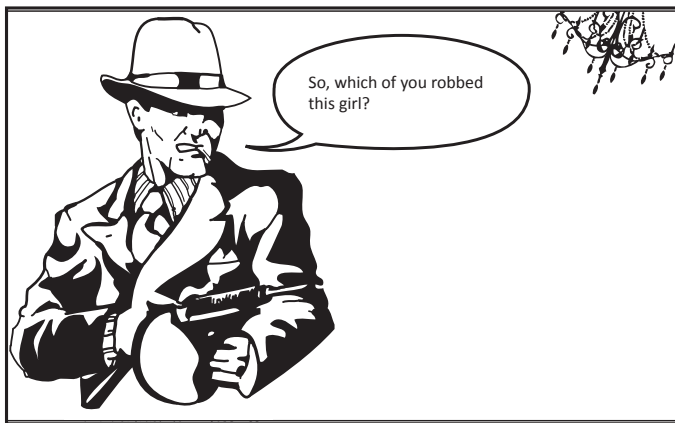
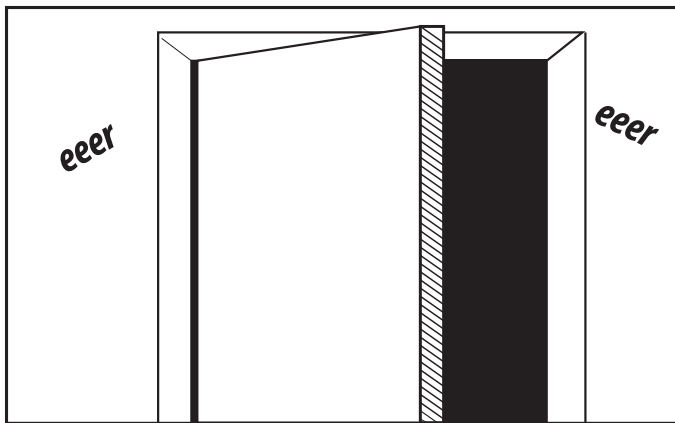
VVVRRRRMMMM!!

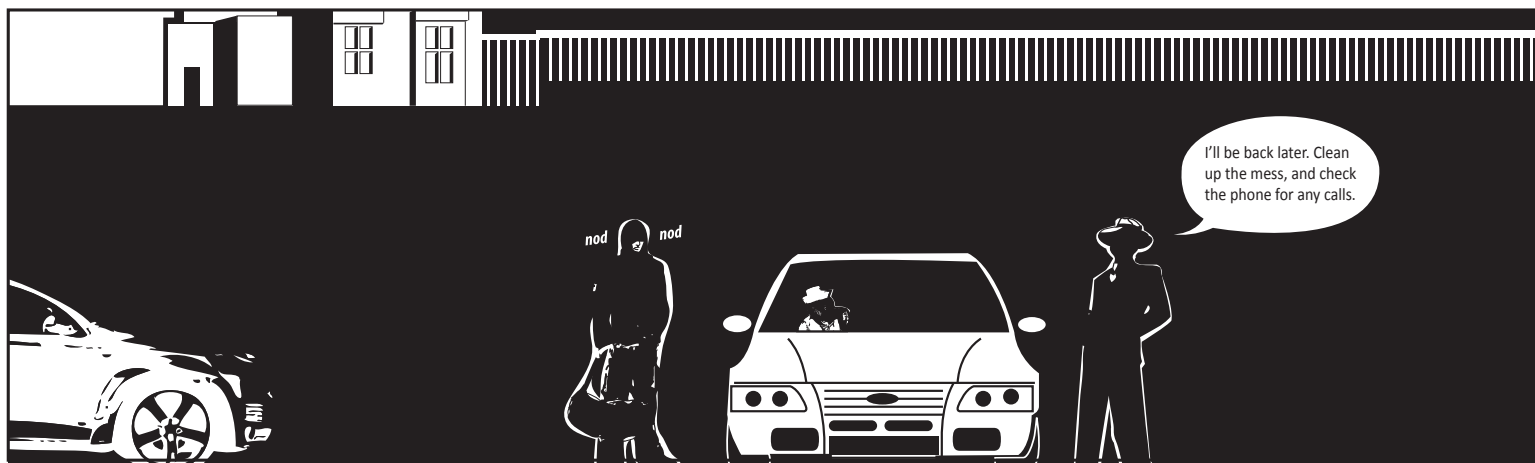


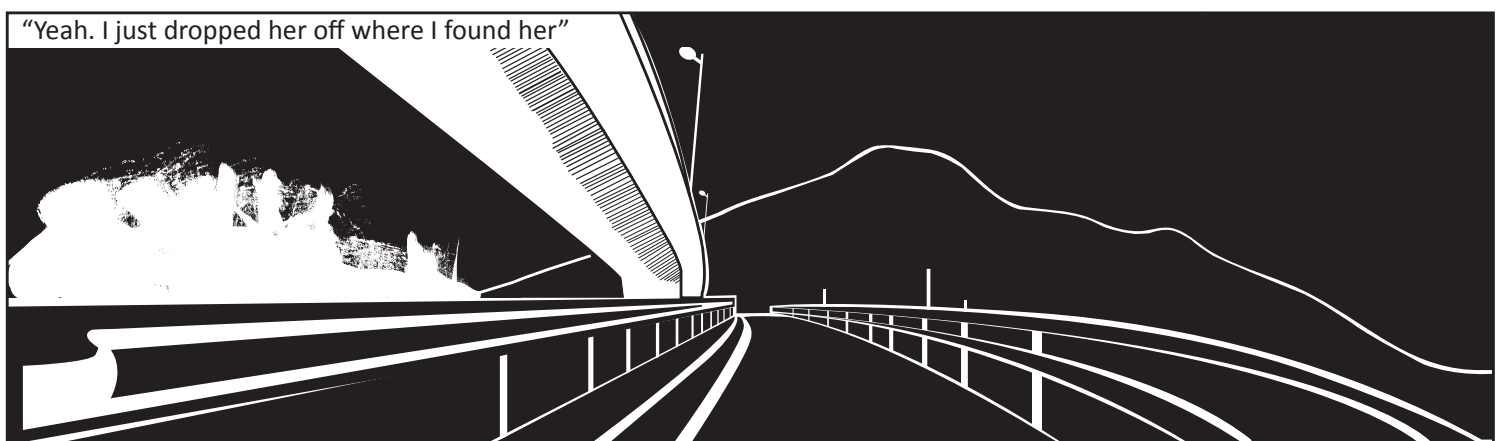
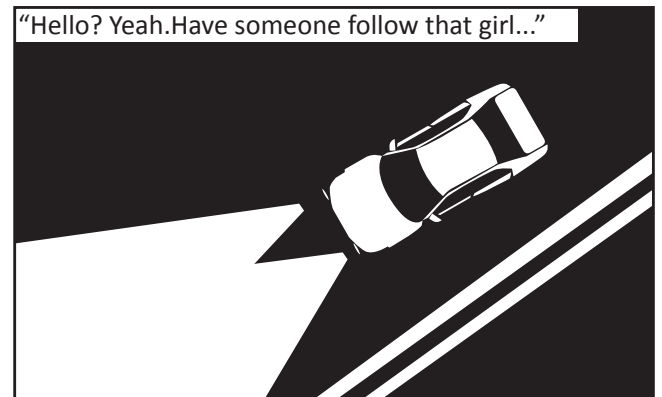
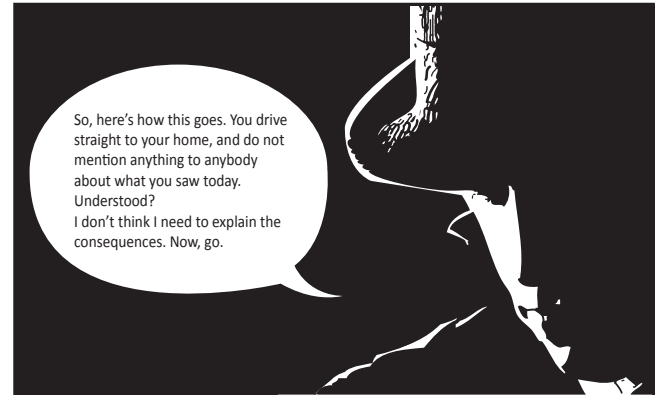
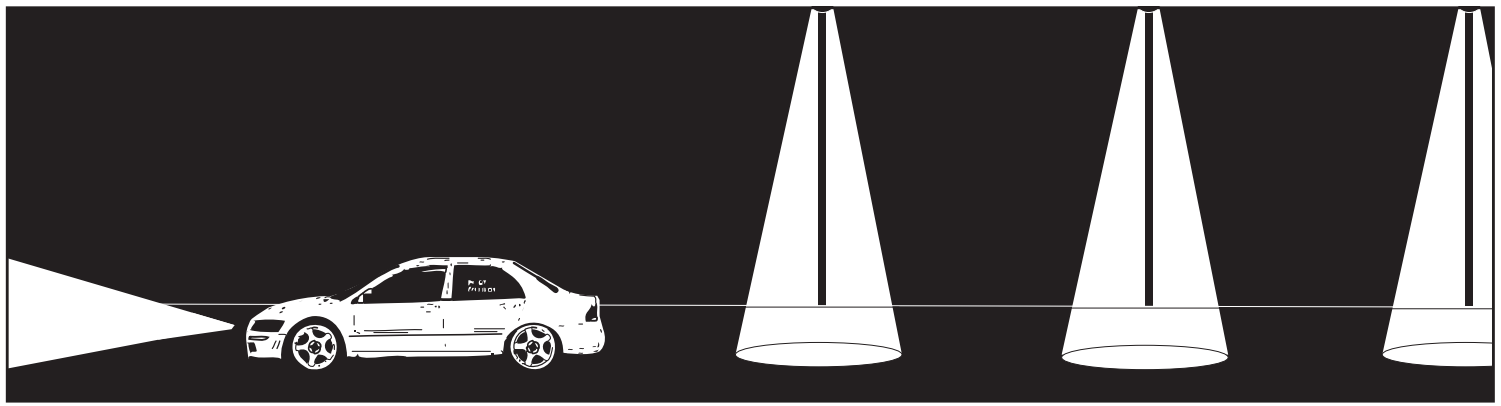












Ana Karen Palacios

Professor Michael Jones

CCT300H5F LEC0101

3rd November 2011

The (Z) Cartel

The present comic, *The (Z) Cartel*, seeks to enter the current discourse concerning the socio-political climate found in Mexico, in regards to the increased (drug) cartel-related violence (The Economist Newspaper Limited). The comic's plot focuses on one of the main drug cartels known as *Los Zetas*— a criminal group which, on the present month of October, made international news for allegedly working with *Iranian Qud* “to bomb Saudi and Israeli embassies in Washington, D.C. and Buenos Aires, Argentina” (Mairata), as well as being the newest target of activist-hacker group, Anonymous (Flock).

Inspired by a story heard from an acquaintance of the artist, the comic's plot relies mainly on pictures, rather than words, to tell the story; an approach observed on Hurwitz's and Campbell's *The Punisher*, where in no. 61, “Girls in White Dresses”, Frank Castle confronts a Mexican Cartel. Yet, in *The (Z) Cartel*, the artist's use of word balloons adds to the storyline in an “additive” (McCloud 154) manner. In regards to the illustrations, the lack of color allows for an objective and direct approach to story-telling; since, in comparison, color dictates a “subjective” (McCloud 190)

experience. Thus, the employment of black and white serves as a visual strategy to reinforce the political undertone of the story.

While not recurring to complete simplification of the form, the drawing style avoids a realistic rendering of the comic's main characters. The former drawing approach allows for "viewer identification" (McCloud 42). According to McCloud, a simplified representation of the iconic image magnifies the ideas behind such— he describes this process as "a form of amplification through simplification" (30). Following McCloud's concept, the faces of Maria and "the driver" remain simplistic enough, without completely falling on the abstract realm; as the example of the 'stick-figure' cartoon does (McCloud 31).

On the other hand, the comic's backgrounds are elaborately drawn. In the comic's story, the backgrounds act as a visual strategy to immerse the viewer in the character's main actions; i.e., driving by the highway, witnessing a murder, and the drive-back after being exposed to the workings of the gang (amongst others). This visual strategy also borrows from McCloud's ideas on "mask[ing]"(43) and "objectifying"(44); where he argues that realistic background representations permit viewers to immerse in the character's actions and "safely enter a sensually stimulating world"(43). An instance of objectification can be found in page 6, at the third panel of the comic. At this point of the storyline, one of the gang members retrieves the car keys from a dead body. The car keys appear as realistic in order to focus the viewer's gaze into the role of the object within

the narrative. Additionally, the objectification of the keys emphasizes the physical properties of the object; i.e. weight, texture, etc (McCloud 43-44).

Furthermore, from reading McCloud's text, one is aware about "time spatially" (100) as a concept that describes how space works to signify time in print medium. As the comic artist, the use of panels, and their transitions, became a key element to illustrate the sequence of actions and the duration of time. The placement of longer panels is deliberately used to evoke a longer passage of time (*please see last panel on page 1*); or as establishing shots which serve to introduce a new scene into the storyline (*please see last panel on page 4*). Throughout the comic, "subject-to-subject" (McCloud 71) transitions stood as the most common type. To the viewer, the former type of transition entails a greater amount of deduction or "closure" (McCloud 63) of the events happening within a single scene. Nevertheless, when the main character finds herself under attack by the robbers, the panel transitions become purely "action-to-action" (McCloud 70). These types of transitions are also used in the climactic scene where the gang leader (also known as "the driver" in the story) shoots one of Maria's robbers (*please see page 5*). Lastly, the comic relies on two "aspect-to-aspect" (McCloud 72) shots to convey a flashback to the robber's threats (*please see page 3*). These two panels intend to convey a sense of trauma aroused from being robbed at gunpoint.

TRANSITIONS FOUND AT <i>THE (Z) CARTEL</i>
Page #1: moment-to-moment (4); scene-to-scene (1)
Page #2: action-to-action (5)
Page #3: subject-to-subject (4) ; aspect-to-aspect (1)
Page #4: subject-to-subject (4) ; scene-to-scene (1)
Page #5: subject-to-subject (3) ; scene-to-scene (1) ; action-to-action(1)
Page #6: subject-to-subject (3) ; scene-to-scene (2)
Page #7: scene-to-scene (3) ; subject-to-subject (2)

Additionally, on the second page of the comic, Maria is shown driving her car into the highway. In order to incite viewer involvement at this point of the story, the comic artist borrows a Japanese technique—known as “subjective motion” (McCloud 114)—which allocates the viewer in the character’s line of sight. As McCloud elaborates on the former, “if observing a moving object can be involving, being that object should be more so” (114).

Thus, through the knowledge and application of McCloud’s text, the present artist means to explore comics as a medium for political discourse—as seen in comics such as *The Punisher* or *Maus*. In this way, the underpinning “idea/purpose” (McCloud 170) of *The (Z) Cartel* is to inform the comic’s audience about the Mexican drug-cartels, and their crimes, at a time where the international community begins to pay attention to the increasingly problematic situation arising from Latin America.

Works Cited

Flock, Elizabeth. The Washington Post. "Anonymous hacker group threatens Mexico's Zetas

Drug Cartel". 31 Oct. 2011. Accessed on October 31st, 2011 < [www.washingtonpost.](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/anonymous-hacker-group-threatens-mexicos-zetas-drug-cartel/2011/10/31/gIQAz5apZM_blog.html)

[com/blogs/blogpost/post/anonymous-hacker-group-threatens-mexicos-zetas-drug-](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/anonymous-hacker-group-threatens-mexicos-zetas-drug-cartel/2011/10/31/gIQAz5apZM_blog.html)

[cartel/2011/10/31/gIQAz5apZM_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/anonymous-hacker-group-threatens-mexicos-zetas-drug-cartel/2011/10/31/gIQAz5apZM_blog.html)>

Hurwitz, Gregg and Laurence Campbell. (2008) "The Punisher: Girls in White Dresses, Part One,

Quinceañera". No. 61. MAX Comics. New York, NY: Marvel Entertainment Inc.

Mairata, Sandro. Univision. "Iran- Zetas: Latin America is waiting for extraordinary

evidence". 16 Oct. 2011. Accessed on October 31st, 2011 <[http://univisionnews.tumblr.](http://univisionnews.tumblr.com/post/11526946202/iran-zetas-latin-america-is-waiting-for-extraordinary)

[com/post/11526946202/iran-zetas-latin-america-is-waiting-for-extraordinary](http://univisionnews.tumblr.com/post/11526946202/iran-zetas-latin-america-is-waiting-for-extraordinary)>

McCloud, Scott. Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1993

The Economist Newspaper Limited. 2011. "Drugs in Mexico: Kicking the Hornet's Nest".

12 Jan. 2011. Accessed on October 31st, 2011 <[http://www.economist.com/blogs/](http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/01/drugs_mexico)

[dailychart/2011/01/drugs_mexico](http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/01/drugs_mexico)>

Image Credits

Mobster 1 pg.4,5

Shutterstock Images LLC. 2003-2011. Image ID: 30667468. Accessed on October 31st, 2011

<<http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-30667468/stock-vector-stylized-illustration-of-mobster-with-tommy-gun.html> >

Mobster 2 pg.6

The Bilerico Project. 2004-2011. "Gay mobster outed by media after secret open court hearing".

Accessed on October 31st, 2011 <http://www.bilerico.com/2009/10/gay_mobster_outed_by_media_after_court_hearing.php >

Mobster 3 pg.6,7

Laborpains.org. 2011. "Newspaper, Unions, and Organized Crimes". Accessed on October 31st,

2011 <<http://laborpains.org/2009/11/>>

Mobster 4 pg.5,6,7

Dev.Blog. 2010. "Cloths Maketh the Man". Accessed on October 31st, 2011 <<http://scarsofwargame.com/DevBlog/clothes-maketh-the-man/>>

Nurse (Silent Hill 3) pg.3,4,6,7

Wikia Gaming (2010) "Silent Hill Wiki". Wikia, Inc. Accessed on October 31st, 2011 < [http://](http://silenthill.wikia.com/wiki/Nurse_%28Silent_Hill_3%29)

silenthill.wikia.com/wiki/Nurse_%28Silent_Hill_3%29 >

Thief pg. 6

Joystiq (2011) "Thfourteeneff". AOL Inc. Accessed on October 31st, 2011 <[http://www.blogcdn.](http://www.blogcdn.com/www.joystiq.com/media/2009/05/thief-4-couldve-been.jpg)

[com/www.joystiq.com/media/2009/05/thief-4-couldve-been.jpg](http://www.joystiq.com/media/2009/05/thief-4-couldve-been.jpg) >